



California Regional Water Quality Control Board

Central Coast Region



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Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

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To Wastewater Collection System Owners or Operators¹:

RE: SEWAGE SPILL REPORTING GUIDANCE

Many of you have recently asked when, where, and how to properly report sewage spills² from your wastewater collection systems. This document is meant to answer those questions. Recent additions to the California Water Code³ will likely result in changes to how sewage spills must be reported. We intend to provide you with updated guidance as those changes are implemented. Should you ever have questions regarding sewage spill reporting, please feel free to contact us any time.

Reporting to the Regional Water Quality Control Board

Oral Notification

Sewage spills greater than 1,000 gallons, all sewage spills that enter waters of the state⁴, and spills that occur where public contact is likely, regardless of the size, must be reported to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Coast Region (Regional Board) by telephone at **(805) 549-3147** as soon as notification is possible and can be provided without substantially impeding cleanup or other emergency measures, and no later than 24 hours from the time that you have knowledge of the spill.

Unless fully contained, sewage spills to storm drains tributary to waters of the State shall be reported as discharges to waters of the state.

Written Report

In addition to oral notification, a written report must be submitted to the Regional Board, **895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101, San Luis Obispo, California, 93401**, within five days of the spill, and must include all information required by the current Sewage Spill Report Form (see attached), or equivalent, as approved by the Regional Board Executive Officer. Attachments to the report should be used as appropriate, and incidents requiring more time than the five-day period must be followed by periodic written status reports until issue closure. Photographs taken during the sewage spill incident and cleanup should be submitted in hard copy and electronic format.

¹ "Collection System Owner or Operator" means the public or private entity having legal authority over the operation and maintenance of, or capital improvements to, the wastewater collection system.

² Sewage spills are also commonly referred to as "Sanitary Sewer Overflows," or "SSOs."

³ See California Water Code Section 13193, which requires the State Water Resources Control Board to develop a uniform sewer spill report form and a sanitary sewer system overflow database "on or before January 1 of a year in which the Legislature has appropriated sufficient funds."

⁴ "Waters of the state" means any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state.



Spills less than 1,000 gallons that do not enter waters of the state or do not occur where public contact is likely must be reported to the Regional Board in writing within 30 days, preferably with the next monthly monitoring report. Such reports shall include a tabular summary of all such spills, including at a minimum: date, time, and approximate duration of the spill; an approximate volume of the spill; location of the spill; whether the spill discharged to surface waters (including conveyances thereto) or land; a description of the response or corrective action taken; and the number of spills at the location in the last three years. A complete Sewage Spill Report Form for each spill may be submitted in lieu of the tabular summary.

Sampling

All sewage spills to surface waters must be sampled to determine impacts to surface waters and ensure adequate cleanup. Spills to ocean waters shall be sampled at a minimum for Total Coliform Organisms, Fecal Coliform Organisms and Enterococcus. Spills to fresh waters shall be sampled at minimum for Fecal Coliform Organisms. Sampling shall be conducted in the affected receiving water body upstream, at, and downstream of the spill's point of entry, and as necessary to characterize the spill's impact and to ensure adequate cleanup. Sampling data shall be submitted to the Regional Board with the next required monitoring report.

Annual Report

An annual report shall be submitted by January 30 of each year, which includes a summary of all spills between January 1 and December 31 of the previous year. The summary should include the following information for each spill:

- a. Information requested in the Sewage Spill Report Form;
- b. How the spill volume was estimated and/or calculated;
- c. Photograph(s) of spill, if taken;
- d. Where the spill entered any storm drain inlet or surface waters;
- e. Steps taken or planned to reduce, eliminate, and prevent recurrence, and a schedule of major milestones for those steps;
- f. Steps taken or planned to mitigate the impact(s) of the spill, and a schedule of major milestones for those steps;
- g. Any additional correspondence and follow-up reports, as necessary, to supplement the Sewage Spill Report Form and to provide detailed information on cause, response, adverse effects, corrective actions, preventative measures, or other information.

The annual summary shall include detailed evaluations of repetitive or chronically occurring circumstances, such as problematic collection system areas or common spill causes, and the corrective actions taken to address such systematic problems.

If no sewage spills occurred in the last calendar year, a statement certifying that no sewage spills occurred may be submitted in lieu of the annual summary.



Reporting to the Governor's Office of Emergency Services

California Water Code Section 13271 requires any person, without regard to intent or negligence, who causes or permits 1,000 gallons or more of sewage to be discharged or deposited in or on any waters of the state, or discharged or deposited where it is, or probably will be, discharged in or on any waters of the state, shall, as soon as (1) that person has knowledge of the discharge, (2) notification is possible, and (3) notification can be provided without substantially impeding cleanup or other emergency measures, immediately notify the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES).

To report sewage spills of 1,000 gallons or more to OES, orally notify the OES Warning Center at: **(800) 852-7550**, or **(916) 845-8911**.

OES will immediately notify the appropriate local health officer and administrator of environmental health of the discharge. Upon receiving notification of the discharge, the local health officer and administrator of environmental health will determine whether notification of the public is required to safeguard public health and safety. If so, the local health officer and administrator of environmental health will immediately notify the public of the discharge by posting notices or other appropriate means.

The following fax number should be used *for follow-up information only*: **(916) 262-1677**. OES reporting requirements for sewage releases and hazardous materials can be located on the OES Website @ www.oes.ca.gov in the California Hazardous Material Spill/Release Notification Guidance. The OES Hazardous Materials Unit staff is available for questions at (916) 845-8741.

OES Reporting Exceptions: Notification to OES of an unauthorized discharge of sewage is not required if: 1) the discharge to state waters is a result of a cleanup or emergency response by a public agency; 2) the discharge occurs on land only and does not affect state waters; or 3) the discharge is in compliance with applicable waste discharge requirements. These exceptions apply only to your responsibility to report to OES, and do not alter the Regional Board's reporting policies or waste discharge requirements.

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